

ALFRED HALLEY RESIDENCE

Address	178 Centre Road, Bentleigh
Significance	Local
Construction Dates	1941-42
Period	Late Interwar
Date Inspected	Early 2019



Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The Alfred Halley Residence at 178 Centre Road, Bentleigh is significant, especially the presentation of the main house to both streets, including its prominent chimney, brickwork and steel-framed windows, as well as the front fence and garage.

The rear addition is not significant.

How is it Significant?

The Alfred Halley Residence at 178 Centre Road, Bentleigh is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Glen Eira.

Why is it Significant?

The Alfred Halley Residence is of historical significance as a substantial residence built at the end of the Interwar period probably by local builder and first occupant, Alfred Halley. It stands out as one of a small group of large and distinctive houses that were constructed to corner sites along the main thoroughfares of Bentleigh during the Interwar period. Such dwellings are important in

illustrating the intensifying suburban development of the district at this time as well as its increasing desirability and affluence. (Criterion A)

The house has aesthetic significance for its intactness, scale and the confidence of its Moderne styling. Well-established elements of the idiom have been employed in a striking manner – the pronounced horizontal emphasis, curved corner with recessed entry, and corner windows, combine to produce a strong ‘streamlined’ effect that is counterpoised by the verticality of its broad feature chimney. The use of cream bricks, contrasting with umber tapestry bricks, and steel-framed windows demarcates the dwelling as from the late Interwar period. A comprehensive design approach was adopted in that complementary detailing was employed to the front fence and garage. (Criterion E)

Description

The freestanding, two-storey house addresses both Centre Road and Clapperton Street from the centre of what had been a sizable allotment.¹ Geometric in form with an elongated footprint, the dwelling has a medium-pitched hip roof clad in dark, glazed terracotta tiles. Tall and wide chimneys feature to both the northern and eastern elevations and are capped by a course of umber bricks. The wide boxed eaves have a dark painted fascia with wide timber lined soffits however they break about the front chimney which serves to heighten its verticality and emphasise the contrast with the general horizontality of the building.

Whilst earlier examples of Moderne style houses tended to be finished in white render, to emphasise their sleekness, late Interwar period examples, as in this instance, were constructed of cream brick (in stretcher bond) with contrasting dark bricks, in this case umber tapestry bricks, which have been employed to highlight street-facing openings and create distinct bands. There is also a slender plinth of umber bricks. This deployment of cream bricks, the use of which proliferated in Melbourne’s suburbs Post-WWII, as well as the grand scale of the dwelling serves to distinguish it from other, more standard examples of the Moderne style and accentuate its ‘modern’ character.

A focal point of the house is the curved and recessed porch with projecting concrete canopy. Its curved form extends through the wall above and first floor window, which has curved plate glass, which during the early 1940s was in its nascent stage of use at the domestic level.² The use of this innovative element, together with steel-frames, would have been readily interpreted at the time as being ‘ultra-modern’ features that were extolled for their ‘excellent horizontal and vertical appearance’ and allowance of ‘maximum’ natural lighting.³ In general, these windows have narrower framing than the timber equivalents and generally consist of a combination of fixed panes with horizontal glazing bars and casements.



Corner frontage



Centre Road frontage

The garage, cuboid in form, is situated forward of the house’s western elevation. It has a roof terrace and replicates the brick and restrained detailing of the house. Its double garage door has been replaced and timber screening added to the upper deck.

¹ In 2018, the City of Glen Eira approved the subdivision of the allotment’s southern section, which will reduce its size from approximately 830m² to 630m²

² During the 1920s, some up-market Melbourne commercial premises and recreational venues, such as athenaeums and cinemas, appear to have utilised curved glass (‘The City Shops’, *Age*, 6 November 1923, p7 and ‘Real Property and Architecture’, *Herald*, 7 November 1928, p10); however, its use at the domestic level was, at best, sparing until the late 1930s. From that time, it came to be used more, almost always in connection with ‘modern’/Moderne designs (‘Caulfield Home Features Curved Walls & Windows’, *Herald*, 6 July 1938, p20 and ‘Home in Glen Iris Strikes New Note’, 17 June 1936, p18)

³ ‘Modern Design Featured in £85,00 New Building’, *Herald*, 10 November 1937, p24

To the rear of the house is a single storey, flat roofed brick addition. Above it, the upper section of the house's southern elevation has been rendered.



Porch detail



West elevation with garage

The front garden has retained its original curved concrete garden path and the overall character of a mid-20th century garden, with a dominant lawn edged with low border plants and shrubs. The low front brick fence reverses the material palette of the house, with amber bricks as walling and cream bricks used as headers in a rowlock coping course. It also has a 'waterfall' effect, rising in height at the western end of the site and a curved corner. There is also a small metal gate with a geometric motif. The corrugated metal privacy fence that divides the interior of the garden is a later addition.

History

The subject site formed part of Dendy's Special Survey or the Brighton Estate.⁴ This large grant – some 8 square miles (5,120 acres) in the Parish of Moorabbin – was acquired by Henry Dendy on 18 October 1841 and was one of only three similar acquisitions made under a quickly revoked English land law.⁵ Special Surveys were a particular method of survey permitted during 1840 and 1841 in which the Crown sold 8 square mile allotments and allowed the internal configuration of the land to be determined by the purchaser.⁶ Its boundaries are reflected in the existing names of the streets of North Road, East Boundary Road and South Road, with Port Phillip Bay as the western boundary.⁷

By 1884, one of Dendy's assisted migrants, Alfred Boucher, later identified as Bentleigh's 'first market gardener', purchased roughly 20 acres (8 ha) on the south side of Centre Road, incorporating the subject site.⁸

Stimulated by a growing metropolitan population, market gardens flourished across Bentleigh during the late 19th century (with numerous poultry farms also active during the Interwar period).⁹ An indication of the area's semi-rural character is provided by Boucher's 1884 subdivision of his Centre Road holding that provided, alongside suburban scaled residential allotments, larger blocks possibly intended for agricultural purposes.¹⁰ At this point, the subject site formed part of one of the larger parcels to the corner of Centre Road at the corner of the newly declared Clapperton Street.¹¹

⁴ Parish Plan of Moorabbin, County of Bourke, M162(2), Landata

⁵ John R Parker, 'Surveying', *eMelbourne*, School of Historical & Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, July 2008, <<http://www.emelbourne.net.au/blogs/EM01455b.htm>>, accessed 16 April 2019

⁶ John B. Parker, 'Surveying', *The Encyclopedia of Melbourne*, eds. Andrew Brown May & Shurlee Swain, p703. It was only one of three such holdings

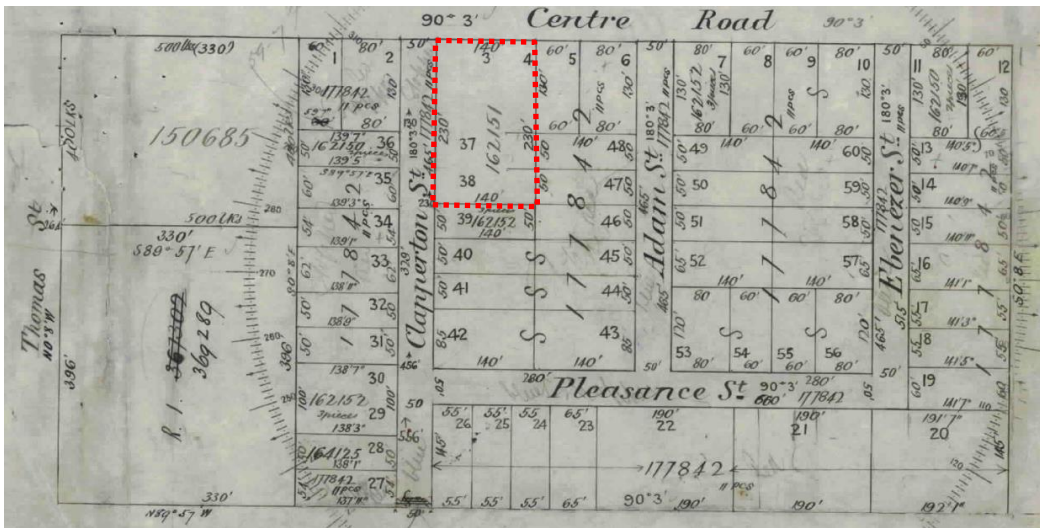
⁷ Parish Plan of Moorabbin, County Bourke, VPRS 16171, P1, Plans Ma-Na

⁸ 'The Men of Middlesex and Kent', *Age*, 4 July 1936, p8; and Certificate of Title, vol.1615, folio 929

⁹ 'Bentleigh and Bentleigh East', *Victorian Places*, 2014, <<https://www.victorianplaces.com.au/bentleigh-and-bentleigh-east>>, accessed 27 March 2019

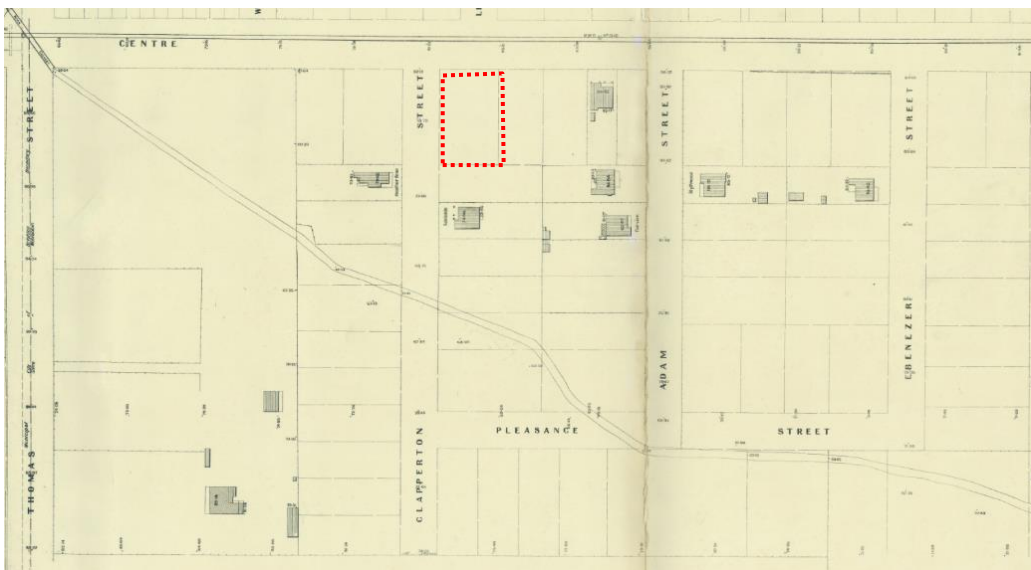
¹⁰ Certificate of Title, vol.1615, folio 929

¹¹ Adams, Ebenezer (Milton) and Pleasance streets were also established at this time (Certificate of Title, vol.1615, folio 929)



Map of Boucher's 1884 subdivision, with the large corner holding that included the subject site, outlined in red. (Source: Certificate of Title, vol.1615, folio 929)

Joseph Emmerson, a 'gentleman' from Collingwood, procured this sizable corner holding in 1886, consisting of four allotments (nos 3 + 4 and 37 + 38) and his family would retain ownership of most of the land into the early 1940s.¹² It is not clear if the Emmerson family actively utilised this property – conceivably it may have just been retained for speculative reasons. As depicted in the following 1927 MMBW plan, their double allotment, in common with much of Boucher's subdivision, remained undeveloped. Subdivided paddocks, devoid of intended dwellings, was a common sight across Bentleigh into the early 20th century, the lingering consequence of the land boom's spectacular bust and onset of the 1890s depression.



The Emmerson corner holding in 1927, the southern section having been subdivided in 1922. (Source: MMBW detail plan 3248, Moorabbin, dated 1927, SLV)

With the electrification of the Frankston line in the late 1920s – cutting commuting time to the Melbourne CBD and nearby employment centres, such as Prahran – residential and commercial development activity gathered pace across Bentleigh, before surging during the 1940s and 1950s (following the easing of wartime rationing).¹³ Fuelling this rapidly consolidating suburban landscape were the 'particular attractions' of the district, namely:

- (its proximity to the seaside, cheap allotments, excellent loamy soil for gardening, and a clean space on which a suburb of entirely new homes and shops could be built, with good modern roads and footpaths, and that general aspect of modernity for

¹² Certificate of Title, vol.1788, folio 590
¹³ 'Bentleigh and Bentleigh East', *Victorian Places*

which home builders have a strong preference... The buyers are not speculators, but persons who in almost every case have been awaiting an opportunity to build homes for themselves.¹⁴

At this time, in 1922, the southern end of the holding was subdivided – creating 16 Clapperton Street. In 1932, Elizabeth, Harriet Archer and Elsie May Emmerton, all then residing at *Waverley* in Banksia Road, Caulfield, owned the site.¹⁵

The encroaching rows of detached and modest dwellings are shown in the 1931 aerial photograph, reproduced below.



1931 aerial, with the subject allotment, indicated by the red arrow.
(Source: Landata, Maldon Prison, Project No. 1931, Run 25, Frame 2480)

With the death of Harriet Archer, Elizabeth and Elsie May Emmerton became the sole proprietors in February 1940 and immediately sold land to the east on Centre Road, what is now nos 180 + 182. A year later, in March 1941, they sold the subject site to Alfred Halley.¹⁶ At that time, Halley a local builder, was a resident of nearby Wilson Street.¹⁷

Construction activity followed swiftly, with the *Sands & McDougall's Directory* recording Halley in occupation in the following year, indicating an erection date between 1941 and 42. He would retain ownership of the property until 1960.¹⁸

On the basis of Halley's newspaper advertisements, he acted as a small-scale builder speculator, common across the suburbs and urban fringe of mid-20th century Melbourne.¹⁹ His approach was typical; the acquisition of one or several allotments – often newly subdivided – and then the expeditious erection of a standard dwelling, dressed in a popular Interwar period style or increasingly during the early 1940s, a more austere build, which would come to predominate post-war. Often furnished with fencing and a garage, the new dwelling would be promoted in the metropolitan press and hopefully sold on quickly to the ranks

¹⁴ 'Real Estate & Building', *Argus*, 2 July 1929, p10

¹⁵ Certificate of Title, vol.1788, folio 590

¹⁶ Certificate of Title, vol. 5781, folio 114. They sold the final part of their holdings – relating to 18 Clapperton – in August 1945

¹⁷ Certificate of Title, vol.6452, folio 321

¹⁸ Certificate of Title, vol.6452, folio 321

¹⁹ E Halley, another speculative builder at work in the district, lived several houses to the east of Alfred Halley's property, at no.190 Centre Road, a single-storey dwelling, also in the Moderne style, around same time (late 1930s-1950s). These two may have been related ('Advertising', *Herald*, 8 July 1939, p38)

of aspiring home owners.²⁰ In the Bentleigh area, known and extant examples of Halley's work survive at 12 Austin Street (1937), 14 Bolinda Street (1939) and 36 Walnut Road (1950).²¹



A photograph in an advertisement for an example of Halley's work at 12 Austin Street, Bentleigh (Source: 'Advertising', *Herald*, 20 February 1927, p39)

It is probable that Halley viewed the erection of his house, which he likely carried out and oversaw, as a means of publicising his proficiency as a builder in the Bentleigh community. This may explain his selection of the Moderne idiom, which while well-established by this time continued to be perceived as 'modern' and 'progressive', particularly in the suburbs. Certainly the scale of Halley's house and his utilisation of curved plate glass – far from a suburban fixture in the early 1940s – would have attracted local attention.

The house with garage is shown in a 1945 aerial photograph, soon after its completion. In addition, the front fence, garden path, prevailing lawn and some outbuildings to the southern boundary are evident.



1945 aerial photograph with the subject site indicated (Source: Landata, Melbourne and Metropolitan Area Project, No.5, Run 10A, Frame 68513)

In c. 1988, a flat roofed, single storey addition was provided to the rear of the house.²² Subsequently a second storey has been added.

²⁰ David Nichols, 'Property Developers', *eMelbourne*, School of Historical & Philosophical Studies, The University of Melbourne, July 2008, <www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM01199b.htm>, accessed 10 April 2019

²¹ 'Advertising', *Herald*, 20 February 1937, p39; 'Bentleigh – New brick villa', *Herald*, 16 December 1939, p38; and 'Bentleigh, 36 Walnut-rd, Ormond – Cream Brick Veneer', *Age*, 29 July 1950, p22.

²² Building File: Budget Drafting Service, 'Proposed Addition at 178 Centre Rd, Bentleigh', October 1988, approved by the City of Moorabbin, November 1988, no.14256

Thematic Context/Comparative Analysis

City of Glen Eira Heritage Management Plan – vol. 1 (Historical Background):

- Epilogue (1940s onwards).

Known comparable places in the City of Glen Eira:

To date, only a small group of Interwar period residences have been included as an individual overlay in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay and/or identified in the HMP as significant, though many are included within precincts. Within the first group, there are two existing Moderne style houses with an individual heritage overlay in the municipality.

- *Linlithgow*, 4 Linlithgow Avenue, Caulfield North (HO41) – large, two storey Moderne style house with rendered walls and brick plinth. Prominent curved corner section with parapet to front, partly concealing the hipped roof. Timber-framed windows, some sashes with horizontal glazing bars. Date of construction not defined.
- *Idamere*, 705 North Road, Carnegie (HO134) – striking large, two storey Moderne style house with brick and rendered walls. Built 1940-44 on a prominent corner location, it has steel-framed windows and extensive use of 'waterfall' element (such as to the parapets and the partly detached chimney).

Other comparable Moderne places include:

- Tyers Residence (recommended for HO), 1118 Dandenong Road, Carnegie – large, single storey Moderne style house in white render and similar tapestry brick detailing. The building was also constructed by and for a locally based builder.
- There are several modest houses displaying the influence of the Moderne style in the existing Interwar period precincts, such as the Bentleigh Environs (HO69). These houses typically include some aspects of the Moderne style such as horizontal emphasis, smooth rendered finishes, curved porches and 'speed lines', however are generally more indicative of a speculative build utilising popular contemporary design elements to 'dress' the façade of a typical suburban house rather than being a fully realised example of the style.

The subject site is one of a few large residences constructed along the major thoroughfares in the area and designed in one of the popular, contemporary styles. These dwellings are indicative of the rise in affluence across the suburb at this time as well as the solidification of its middle-class identity. Other Interwar period examples include:

- 118 Jasper Road, Bentleigh (HO119) – a large Bungalow style house in red and brown brick with some render. Prominent front porch with paired arches. Date not known, but likely mid-1920s.
- *Moore Residence* (recommended for HO), 200 Centre Road, Bentleigh – single storey but sprawling clinker brick residence with a prominent high pitched roof, multiple tall chimneys in the Old English style, designed in an accomplished manner by Marsh & Michaelson in 1936.
- 201 Centre Road, Bentleigh (not recommended) – two storey rendered, 1930s Old English style house with multiple high-pitched gables, tall chimneys and an array of corbelling and clinker brick detail. Its integrity however has been compromised by modifications, including a disproportionately large garage block.

Condition

Good

Integrity

Largely intact.

Previous Assessment

C grade (local significance) – Andrew Ward, *Bentleigh survey*, map 4, March 1996

Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls

External Paint Controls	No
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Outbuildings and/or Fences	No

Extent of Heritage Overlay

The proposed extent of the heritage overlay would be the parcel of land associated with 178 Centre Road, Bentleigh. Currently the site is defined as Lot 1 TP118798 but the southern part is due to be subdivided.



Recommended extent of registration.
(Source: Nearmap, depicting February 2019)